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AUSTRALIAN LEGENDARY TALES. Folk-lore of the Noongahburrahs, as told to the piccaninnies. Collected by Mrs. K. LANGLOH PARKER. With Introduction by ANDREW LANG. Illustrations by a native artist, and specimens of the native text. London: David Nutt. 1896. Pp. xvi, 132.

This small but valuable collection of tales is especially gratifying, because it indicates that in Australia the stream of oral tradition still flows, and that with very little effort it will be possible to make collections and records much more complete than the fragmentary and inadequate material now presented in print. Mrs. Parker found no difficulty in obtaining the tales from natives, who were glad to assist her in every possible way. With such an example, Australian scholars and Australian governments ought to lose no time in setting on foot such scientific investigation as will perfect the account of the literature and customs of a most interesting and misrepresented race. Englishmen in Australia owe some atonement to the tribes they have treated with such brutality, and such complete misapprehension of their characteristics. It needs only the merest smattering of native folk-lore, as a native himself possesses it, to satisfy any inquirer that the Australian "blackfellow" is a man like himself, fully endowed with all human powers of memory, imagination, admiration, aspiration, affection, artistic perception, and only because of want of opportunity radically different from his conquerors.

The publication of these tales is a further attestation, if any were needed, of the unscientific nature of the contempt visited on folk-tales, as if these were less important to record than ceremonies and gestures. The plain truth is that custom, ritual, art, and archæology, without folk-lore, is a body without a soul. All investigations into primitive culture or historical monuments, where illumination cannot be obtained from written or oral literature, are barren and lifeless.

Gratitude is due to Mrs. Parker for her welcome addition to Australian lore. It must, however, be observed that the work is, and indeed professes to be, only that of an amateur who has had in mind the effect of the tales as pleasing stories for English youth. The translation is not exact; the social and ethnic relations are not expounded. The collector is herself under an error in regard to the nature of the stories she furnishes, imagining that these are primarily native nursery tales; strange to say, this error is shared by Mr. Andrew Lang, who, in his introduction, declares them to be chiefly *Kindermärchen*. A more complete misapprehension of the truth could hardly be made; in the tales we seem to have, at least in part, reduced and distorted forms of the sacred tradition of the tribe, narratives which without doubt have their counterpart in ritual. Edited in the guise in which they appear, it is impossible to conjecture just what they mean, or place they have in tribal life and worship. They furnish, however, satisfactory light on the system of native ideas, which indicates that these were not very different from those of races considered to rank much higher in the culture scale.

It appears from the tales that the Australian's conception of ancestral life is not very different from that of American Indians. In the beginning, forefathers of the animals who now people the earth possessed human form, and lived together in a sort of confederacy ; their development into present conditions was the result of certain acts, just as in Ovid's poetry the animals of antiquity are said to have owed their form to the character of the deeds committed in human relations. Of course this fabulous early community was, in its rules and observances, a double of the existing social state. No doubt many of the stories are intended to explain present customs, and are connected with sacred usages ; but, as already observed, the manner in which they are given does not permit any definite opinion on this head.

A very significant narrative gives us an account of the *bora*, or initiation of young men, undertaken by these ancestors. With respect to this custom, apparently the centre of the social religious festivals of Australians, the government of New South Wales has published what is known.

Mr. Lang speaks of the ritual of the *bora* as recorded ; this, we think, is an error ; the ceremonies have been externally in part noted, but without the mythology and accompanying song the true purport of the rites cannot be said to be understood. From the tale of Mrs. Parker may be derived additional information. A great *bora*, it would seem, is a gathering of many tribes, a sacred festival at which confederacies are formed, treaties arranged, alliances entered into ; in short, we have the rudiments of a state founded on kinship connection. When the time arrives, a circle is cleared in the bush, round which is built an earthen dam. At night is held a corroboree or dance ; two medicine men begin a feigned battle, while from the bush is heard a whizzing sound. This is the noise of a piece of wood on the end of a string ; but it is believed to be the voices of the spirits (perhaps of ancestors) who are on their way to attend the rite. (No doubt these spirits are presented by painted natives.) On the next day the camp is moved inside the ring ; according to the tale, it would seem that religious silence is observed, it being believed that a careless word would be punished by petrifaction. The voices of spirits are everywhere heard, and the camp is surrounded also by hostile demons, to enter whose camp is to perish. During the night the women hold a sacred dance of their own, and the younger ones are afterward made to retire into the ring of green booths surrounding the sacred circle. The men charged with the care of the youths to be initiated (it seems possible that these bearers will be found to impersonate guardian spirits) carry off their pupils on their shoulders ; after this the older women join the younger ones in the booths, which are covered with a screen of boughs. What further takes place is a profound secret. On the next day, however, a second ring is made at a distance, this time of grass, into which the candidates are brought, and receive the adieus of the older women after the younger ones have been put to sleep. Each candidate then retires with his teacher ; after six months from this instruction (and doubtless from communing with spirits of the forest), the youths appear in the camp, wild and shy, the loss of a

tooth or certain scarifications indicating their experiences. The tale represents the shaman or deity who has conducted this typical bora as retiring to a distant mountain, on which he continues a lonely life; whoever looks on his face will perish. (Perhaps we have here indicated a habit on the part of shamans of living as hermits.) Of the legends recited, of the tales sung at this initiation, we do not further learn.

It need not be pointed out how completely destructive is that account (the genuineness of which is beyond question, since it comes from native mind itself) of those theories which assume a radical difference between the mental functioning, in matters of religion, of the most primitive savages and those of civilized races. The writer of this notice cannot but think that the assertion of Mr. Lang, with reference to these aborigines, that "their worship at best was offered in hymns to some vague, half-forgotten deity," and that "spirits were scarcely defined or described," is contrary to the indications of the collection. He ventures to regard the information thus obtained as a justification of a conjecture made in a paper delivered at the International Congress of Anthropology, Chicago, 1893b, on "Ritual regarded as a Dramatization of Myth," in which, after pointing out that American aboriginal dances "are in part dramatizations of myths, performed by costumed personages, who enact the part of divine beings," he added: "It may be affirmed that what is known of Australian or African rituals is in no way inconsistent with the supposition that these conditions do represent the theory of the religious usage of uncultured races in general. . . . It will be enough to suggest that an original feature of early worship is the mystery or sacred dramatic representation; that in such rites the worshippers consider themselves as visited by their divine relatives, who perform before their eyes a representation of the presumed sacred history which constitutes the testimony of the divine existence, and the repetition of which is assumed to be a condition of divine aid."

W. W. N.

THE LEGEND OF PERSEUS. A Study of Tradition in Story, Custom, and Belief. By EDWIN SIDNEY HARTLAND, F. S. A. Vol. III. *Andromeda. Medusa.* London: David Nutt. 1896. Pp. xxxviii, 225.

This third volume concludes Mr. Hartland's eminently sensible and useful book, of which the first two parts have already received notice in the pages of this Journal.

The legend, in the forms which have come down to us, relates the imprisonment of a princess by a father jealous of her future possible offspring, the supernatural birth of the babe (Danaë conceiving from Jupiter in the golden shower), the exposure of the mother (Danaë cast on the water), her rescue and courtship by a king on the shore of whose country she is cast, the attempt of this suitor to rid himself of the hero by sending the latter on a perilous expedition (to slay the Gorgon Medusa), the destruction of the latter in virtue of divine assistance, the release, as an episode, of a lady in danger of being sacrificed to a serpent (*Andromeda*), the final deliverance of the mother and ruin of the tyrant king, and the accomplish-